

Epsom and Ewell Town-Twinning Association invites Cyril Frazer Award entries

16 February 2026

Epsom and Ewell Town-Twinning Association



Epsom and Ewell Town-Twinning Association is inviting applications for this year's **Cyril Frazer Award**, a prize established in memory of Cyril Frazer, who died in 2016. Cyril Frazer was Mayor of Epsom and Ewell when the town was first twinned with Chantilly in 1995 and was a founding member of the association. Alongside his commitment to town twinning, he was passionate about singing and was a keen member of the Epsom Male Voice Choir.

Both of these interests are reflected in the award, which offers a top prize of £500 and is open to individuals and groups within the Borough. The award will be made to qualified applicants who meet some or all of the agreed criteria, including living or studying in the Borough, meeting a special need such as mental or physical health, benefiting young people, having cultural or educational value, being related to music or the performing arts, furthering friendships or links with Chantilly, or supporting a key twinning or community event.

Last year's winner was Sarah Carpenter of Southfield Primary School, with runners-up Siobhan Cornell and Jo Johnstone from the French and Music departments at Wallace Fields Junior School, and Olivia Gioffredo from Epsom College. The winner received a £500 grant to support French visits and learning activities planned by Southfield Park School, while the joint runners-up each received £250 to support their work in French education and musical study.

Association secretary Diana Deavin said: "Last year we were very impressed by the quality of the submissions received, which is why we awarded a total of £1,000 in the end. We are looking forward to receiving ideas and suggestions and are hopeful that this year will exceed our expectations once again. Please do consider submitting an application, as we are keen to receive entries from as wide as possible a range of potential beneficiaries and keep Cyril's name alive in this very meaningful way."

The prize will be awarded at the Twinning Association's AGM in June, with a closing date for applications of **May 31, 2026**. For further information or to apply, contact diana@epsomtwinning.com.

Related report:

Epsom and Ewell Town-Twinning Association presents Cyril Frazer Awards for 2025

Edinburgh Duke visits Surrey's Arts University

16 February 2026



Thursday 12th February, The Duke of Edinburgh visited University for the Creative Arts (UCA) and its School of Creative & Cultural Industries, to celebrate it providing 170 years of practice-based, creative education and to meet its current young creatives who study across traditional and emerging arts.

UCA welcomed The Duke, who has a professional background in the creative industries and is a Patron of a range of organisations that aim to widen opportunities within the sector.

His Royal Highness was met at UCA by Joint Acting Vice-Chancellors, Professor Melanie Gray and Professor Mark Ellul, alongside Chancellor, Dame Magdalene Odundo; Executive Dean, Professor Sophy Smith; and Pro-Vice Chancellor Academic Partnerships & Industry Engagement, Professor Lyndsay Duthie.

Professors Gray and Ellul, commented: "We are honoured to welcome HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, a recognised champion of the arts, to UCA in Farnham. We were delighted to give His Royal Highness a tour of our specialist facilities, where he got hands-on experience of traditional crafts to future-facing technologies, and introduce him to the next

generation of creatives, our talented student community.”

The Duke was also introduced to globally renowned fashion designer and UCA Chancellor Emerita, Dame Zandra Rhodes. Zandra began her own creative career at UCA, studying at one of its former art colleges in the 1960s, which she credits as the foundation for her creativity.

Other alumni to meet The Duke included actor Gabin Kongolo, who made history as the first Black person to perform and speak Welsh on stage at Shakespeare’s Globe and ceramicist Tim Fluck, a British Ceramics Biennial Fresh Talent Award winner.

The Duke’s tour formally commenced in UCA’s creative workshops, including its glass studio, where UCA is among only a handful of specialist institutions in the UK to offer a degree in the subject. Before the tour shifted up a gear, showcasing UCA’s high-tech filmmaking space, its Virtual Production studio. Students used real-time rendering software and motion capture to immerse His Royal Highness in a scene from Moryow, which was shot in the space and will make its debut on the film festival circuit later this year.

Professor Duthie then led a Creative Economy Roundtable discussion in which The Duke actively participated, alongside UCA academics and members of the University’s very own Creative & Cultural Industries Leaders Network, as well as alumni.

Professor Duthie said: “The UK’s creative and cultural industries contribute £126bn to the economy and support over 2.4 million jobs. Concurrently the sector is being fundamentally reshaped by emerging technologies. It was encouraging to hear His Royal Highness articulate a vision that aligns so closely with ours. At UCA, we are preparing the next generation not just to adopt new tools, but to shape how they are used — equipping students to think critically, create boldly, and lead an industry evolving faster than ever before.”

The Duke’s tour concluded with the unveiling of an artwork created by second year BA Graphic Design student, Ella Stevenson and received a piece of glassware designed by glass technician, Laura Quinn. The works marked The Duke’s visit, celebrating 170 years of UCA.

The Duke said: “Congratulations on 170 years of developing all those essential arts, crafts and keeping the creative flame well and truly alight.”

University of the Creative Arts.

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Surrey University installs Vice-Chancellor number six

16 February 2026



Guildford Cathedral played host as town and gown come together to see formal installation of Professor Stephen Jarvis as Surrey’s sixth Vice-Chancellor

In a ceremony that fused a message about the dual research and teaching purpose of the University, the urgency of a rapidly changing world, and age-old academic pageantry, Professor Stephen Jarvis was formally installed as the University of Surrey’s sixth President and Vice-Chancellor at Guildford Cathedral on 11 February.

The academic and civic occasion was attended by community representatives and leaders – including council leaders, current and former MPs and representatives from across the region’s business and academic communities, alongside hundreds of staff and students from across the University community.

Professor Jarvis shared a message of a University with deep local roots – bringing together our community of academics, students and graduates with the wider community in Guildford, Surrey and beyond to contribute to social, economic and cultural wellbeing. He spoke of a University with a critical leadership role in combining entrepreneurship and purpose to find solutions to the challenges of the modern world, and in driving economic growth, social opportunity and the future

skills agenda.

A computational scientist and former Royal Society Industry Fellow who helped establish The Alan Turing Institute, Professor Jarvis is internationally recognised for his academic leadership in high-performance computing, data science and applied artificial intelligence. On these foundations, he has established himself as an institutional and sector leader. At the University of Birmingham, where he served as Provost and Vice-Principal, he played a central role in shaping strategic vision, whilst at the University of Warwick he led industry-academic partnerships in big data as Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research).

Professor Jarvis took up the role of President and Vice-Chancellor at the University of Surrey on 15 September 2025. In his address to a packed cathedral, he said:

“The University of Surrey is defined by a dual commitment to excellence in both education and research. Ours is also a university with a clear sense of purpose: to provide an education that equips graduates for the world of work, and to undertake research that addresses some of the most urgent challenges facing society.

“Surrey aspires to be recognised among the very best universities in the UK, with a strong and growing global reputation, reach and influence. I firmly believe that the UK needs universities like ours to navigate the opportunities and challenges of technological change, respond to critical skills needs, and prepare students for the workplaces of the future.

“The University of Surrey is deeply rooted in its local community – not only a place of learning and discovery, but also an active contributor to the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of the communities we serve. The long-term success of a place is built through a shared endeavour: universities, colleges and schools that educate and inspire; public services that protect and enable; infrastructure that connects people to opportunity; and governance that provides stability, trust and direction. Aligned, we don’t just function, we flourish.”

The installation ceremony featured a traditional academic procession with full regalia, a specially commissioned fanfare, and music from the University Chamber Choir. The fanfare has been arranged for the installation by Dr Christopher Wiley, Head of Music and Media at the University, having been originally composed by the renowned composer of the day Dame Ethel Smyth. Dame Ethel lived in Surrey for most of her life and is commemorated at the University and with a statue in her home town of Woking. More information on the fanfare is included in the Notes to Editors, below.

Professor Jarvis joins Surrey as the University continues to deliver Vision 2041, its long-term strategy to become a globally recognised top 100 leader in research, innovation, education and civic engagement. The University has achieved its highest-ever global position of 219th in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2026 and remains within the UK top 15 for student satisfaction, with 85% of graduates progressing into highly skilled employment.

Surrey University



The specially commissioned fanfare was originally composed in the 1930s as one of eight Fanfares for the Musicians’ Benevolent Fund, each composed by one of the eight best-known British composers of the day, based on a traditional military bugle call. The ‘Men’s Meal (2nd call)’ bugle call, also known as ‘Hot Potatoes’ was composed as a fanfare by **Dame Ethel Smyth**, who lived in Surrey for most of her life and is commemorated at the University and with a statue in her home town of Woking. As well as producing an impressive canon of musical works, Dame Smyth was a much-published author and an influential suffragette. Her fanfare was first performed by the Royal Military School Bandsmen under Captain H.E. Adkins at a Musicians’ Benevolent Fund Annual Dinner held in London’s Savoy Hotel on 8 May 1930. It was recorded by the same ensemble and performed on other occasions, but the manuscript was lost, with Dr Wiley using the 1930s recording to bring the fanfare back to life for today’s installation.

Related report:

[Surrey’s suffragette composer re-imagined in many ways](#)

Surrey’s suffragette composer re-imagined in many ways

16 February 2026



Rediscovering long forgotten music does not mean recovering how it was meant to be performed, and that is a major challenge for the arts, finds a new study from the University of Surrey. An expert found that rediscovered music comes with no shared understanding for how it should sound, leaving performers to make radically different interpretive choices that reshape the work itself.

In an article published in *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, a researcher focused on a little-known piano miniature by Surrey-based British composer Ethel Smyth, written in the late nineteenth century and forgotten for 120 years. When the piece re-emerged in the 1990s and began to be performed again, no traditions of interpretation had survived. There were no clear instructions for tempo, expression or dynamics, and no recordings of historical performances to learn from.

To understand what happens when performers face this problem, the research compared all professional recordings of the same rediscovered work. Using specialist audio analysis software, each performance was measured beat by beat to track tempo and rhythmic fluctuation across the piece.

Each pianist approached the music in a fundamentally different way, particularly at its unfinished ending. Some slowed dramatically, others pushed forward and none aligned closely with one another. Even the earliest modern recording failed to establish a shared interpretive reference point.

Dr Christopher Wiley, author of the study and Head of Music and Media at the University of Surrey, said:

“When musicians open a score like this, they are standing on empty ground. While written in standard notation that is commonly understood, there is no inherited wisdom to lean on as to how the piece is supposed to be played. What I found when analysing modern recordings was not small variation in interpretation but completely different musical identities emerging from the same notes. This is creative and exciting, but also unsettling.”

The research argues that this challenge will only grow, as more pieces by historically marginalised composers are rediscovered. Nor is it an issue unique to music: performers across arts disciplines such as theatre and dance will likewise increasingly encounter works stripped of their original interpretive traditions.

Rather than relying solely on manuscripts, the study proposes more imaginative solutions: performers may need to draw on unconventional sources such as letters, memoirs and personal writings to guide interpretation. In this case, Smyth’s later autobiographical descriptions of the person she aimed to portray through her music offered valuable insight into its character, mood and emotional intent.

Surrey University



Image: Ethel Smyth with score to her composition *March of the Women* in the background. Sources: English composer and suffragette Ethel Smyth (1858-1944) Library of Congress’s Prints and Photographs division under the digital ID [ggbain.33693](https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/smyth-march-of-the-women), Author George Grantham Bain Collection; Restored by Adam Cuerden Score: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/smyth-march-of-the-women>. Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication. Montage created by Epsom and Ewell Times and is copyrighted.

Epsom and Ewell Times adds: Dame Ethel Mary Smyth DBE (22 April 1858 – 8 May 1944) was an English composer and a member of the women’s suffrage movement. Her compositions include songs, works for piano, chamber music, orchestral works, choral works and operas. She lived in Surrey from childhood.

Surrey Uni on challenging AI decisions

16 February 2026



AI systems already decide how ambulances are routed, how supply chains operate and how autonomous drones plan their missions. Yet when those systems make a risky or counter-intuitive choice, humans are often expected to accept it without challenge, warns a new study from the University of Surrey.

Epsom and Ewell Times adds that the Civil Aviation Authority has granted Amazon a licence to deliver items by drone. It is uncertain when this service will actually begin.

The research, published in the *Annals of Operations Research*, looked at the use of optimisation algorithms in relevant areas such as transport, logistics, healthcare and autonomous systems. Optimisation algorithms are systems that decide the best possible action by weighing trade-offs under fixed rules such as time, cost or capacity. Unlike prediction models that estimate what will happen, optimisation algorithms choose what should be done.

Optimisation algorithms decide what gets prioritised, delayed or excluded under strict limits such as weight, cost, time and capacity. Yet those decisions are mathematically correct but practically opaque.

The research team's findings implies that our increasing 'blind trust' creates serious safety and accountability risks in the increasing areas of everyday life where optimisation algorithms are used.

Using a classic optimisation challenge known as the Knapsack problem, the research demonstrates how machine learning models can learn the structure of an optimisation decision and then explain it in plain language. The method shows which constraints mattered most, why certain options were selected and what trade-offs pushed others out.

The study shows how organisations can challenge optimisation algorithms before their decisions are put into practice. Rather than replacing existing systems, the approach works alongside them, using machine learning to analyse decisions and explainable AI to reveal why one option was chosen over another and which constraints and trade-offs shaped the outcome.

Dr Wolfgang Garn, author of the study and Associate Professor of Analytics at the University of Surrey, said:

"People are increasingly asked to trust optimisation systems that quietly shape major decisions. When something looks wrong, they often have no way to challenge it. Our work opens those decisions up so humans can see the logic, question it and intervene before real-world consequences occur."

This is particularly important for autonomous systems such as delivery drones. Drones must constantly decide which packages to carry while balancing battery life, payload weight and safety requirements. Without transparency, regulators and operators cannot easily justify or audit those decisions.

Rather than replacing existing optimisation software, the approach works alongside it. Machine learning is used in this approach to analyse solutions, explain feasibility and identify brittle or high-risk decisions before deployment.

The research introduces a structured framework that ensures explanations are tailored to real decision makers. Instead of technical outputs, systems can provide human-readable reasoning, such as: "too many heavy items were selected, or battery limits were prioritised over delivery value."

Dr Garn continued:

"Regulators are starting to ask harder questions about automated decisions. If you can't explain why your system chose one option over another, you'll struggle to get approval — or defend yourself when something goes wrong. This framework makes that explanation possible."

Surrey University



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Ewell's Nescot graduates prove you don't have to move away to go far

16 February 2026



Over 90 Nescot students gathered at Epsom Downs Racecourse on Friday for their Higher Education Graduation Ceremony, donning caps and gowns to celebrate their success with proud parents, families and tutors.

The event marked a major milestone for students who completed university-level qualifications while studying close to home, proving that higher education doesn't have to mean moving away to succeed. For many, Nescot offered the best of both worlds: small, supportive classes with expert teaching, alongside the flexibility to continue living with family while balancing study with local work.

Nescot partners with several prestigious universities including Kingston University, the University of Greenwich, the University of West London, The Open University and the University of Arts London (UAL), offering degrees and other university-level qualifications across subjects including healthcare, performing arts, education, art and design, teaching, management and sports science.

Guests of Honour on the day included the Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, Councillor Robert Leach, alongside Nescot honorary fellows Paul Nicholson, former professional darts player, and Jane Wilson-Howarth, world-renowned physician, author and zoologist.

Julie Kapsalis, CEO and Principal at Nescot said: "Our higher education graduation ceremony is one of my favourite days of the year. It's exciting and joyful, but the overwhelming emotion is pride. Students, who've put their heart and soul into achieving their qualifications, feel so proud of themselves as they step on stage. Families, who've often been there for students every step of the way, burst with pride at what their son, daughter, brother or sister has achieved. There are usually a few tears too, some from our incredible staff who have watched these students persevere, learn and grow and are now waving them off to careers in their chosen fields. Whether you come to us aged 16 or 66, Nescot is a launchpad and I wish all our graduates every success with whatever comes next."

Students from across the college were fully involved in the ceremony. Travel and tourism students welcomed guests on arrival, music students provided DJ sets and live music throughout, and performing arts students surprised the audience with an incredible singing flashmob.

Guest of honour, Paul Nicholson, gave an inspiring speech, telling students: "What you've done to get here is remarkable - you should be extremely proud of yourselves. But by being here you haven't finished; you've only just started. Your ambitions should never have an end date...with the skills and experience Nescot has given you, make our world a little bit better every day."

Madiha Mahmood who studied for a BA (Hons) in Education Studies gave a speech at the ceremony, including a thank you to lecturers, tutors and support staff at Nescot: "Your dedication, patience, and belief in us, especially during challenging moments, has made a lasting difference. You have guided us, encouraged us, and pushed us to be the best versions of ourselves.

Today is a celebration, but it is also a reminder. A reminder that it doesn't matter how long it takes. It doesn't matter if you fail at the start. It doesn't matter how many people doubt you. If you keep going, you can change your whole story. Congratulations to every graduate here today, we did it!"

No matter which qualification students are working towards, Nescot's lecturers and tutors are dedicated to helping them reach their full potential. Staff are experienced tutors but also have substantial experience of working in the relevant industry too. Student satisfaction is high, with National Student Survey results showing the college is "significantly above the benchmark" across all 27 categories.

To find out more about studying at Nescot call 020 8394 3038, visit www.nescot.ac.uk or email adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk

NESCOT



Rosebery school Epsom puts Henry 8's six on stage

16 February 2026



An Epsom school brought Broadway and the West End to Surrey last week with a successful run of the musical 'Six: Teen Edition'.

The play, which is adapted from the international hit musical *SIX* by Toby Marlow and Lucy Moss, tells the story of the six wives of Henry VIII from their own perspective.

Pupils from Rosebery School, part of GLF Schools, performed at the Leatherhead Theatre from Wednesday 28 January to Friday 30 January 2026, this school-friendly 75-minute version brought history to life as a modern pop concert, filled with humour and bold storytelling.

The high-energy show saw the six Queens reclaim their narratives on stage, each sharing her unique perspective through dazzling numbers and dynamic choreography.

The production celebrated resilience, individuality, and sisterhood with tremendous attitude and empowerment, earning enthusiastic applause from audiences across the run.

This ambitious endeavour united more than 140 students from Rosebery School in roles spanning performance, music, technical production, costume design, and leadership.

Rehearsals began in early October, and the students demonstrated exceptional commitment, collaboration, and teamwork throughout the production.

The production featured a fully student-run backstage team handling stage management, wardrobe, makeup, and technical operations, as well as a talented student choreographer who shaped the Queens' movement with creativity and confidence.

The Senior Prefect Team also took part, spearheading a fundraising campaign to support performing arts at Rosebery.

The production also showcased outstanding cross-curricular collaboration. Bespoke costumes were designed by A-Level fashion and textiles students, blending historical influences with contemporary flair. A-Level design and technology students engineered the show's thrones, with music performed by members of the school band.

David Lach, headteacher at Rosebery School, praised the joint efforts of everyone involved in the production. He said:

"This is a truly homemade production, and a distinctively Rosebery production too. From the thrones crafted by our students, to the choreography to the outfits worn, our students have well and truly put their stamp on *Six*."

"The end result was a remarkable performance, blending education and history with contemporary flair and messages of resilience and independence. Huge congratulations to everyone who took part, and thank you to all our wider community who supported us."

James Nicholson, interim CEO of GLF Schools, saw the production last week. He said: "I was hugely impressed with Rosebery's production, which showed great talent, professionalism and imagination. Everyone who took part is a huge credit to the school, and the wider GLF family."

Release on behalf of GLF schools

Photo: Credit: Simon Drake Photography

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A recipe for success - Dame Prue Leith visits Ewell's Nescot

16 February 2026



Dame Prue Leith DBE visited students at Nescot college in Epsom today, to share her experience, expertise and enthusiasm with students, including the next generation of culinary talent.

Prue, a chef, author and founder of Leiths Education, as well as a broadcaster and former judge on 'The Great British Bake Off', met students and staff and toured Nescot's award-winning catering and cookery facilities. She also watched students in action, chatting to them as they prepared some of her own recipes in the college's professional kitchens.

During the visit, Prue spoke about her incredible life, during an 'in conversation' session attended by around 250 students from business, catering, art and design, healthcare and media courses. The session, facilitated by Nescot's CEO and Principal, Julie Kapsalis, included questions about setting up her cookery school, her writing career, including her new book due out in February, and how she moved into broadcasting. Prue also shared personal anecdotes from her time on TV and highlighted the importance of healthy eating and nutrition, an area she has previously advised the government on.

Julie Kapsalis, CEO and Principal at Nescot said "Although many of our students know her from the Bake Off, Prue is a powerhouse business leader, an amazing chef, an author and an educator. Her career is an incredible demonstration of how with determination, resilience and hard work, one person can achieve across several fields. Our Professional Cookery students loved showing her their skills and I know they appreciated her advice, which no doubt they'll refer to when they're running kitchens of their own. Prue has shown our students that the sky's the limit - we're so grateful for her time."

Prue Leith said "Nescot is amazing! Truly professional, caring teachers and enthusiastic students."

As well as Professional Cooking qualifications, Nescot offers a wide range of courses for school leavers and adults, including Animal Care, Hair & Beauty, Computing and IT, Construction, Performing Arts, Childcare and Health & Social Care. To find out more about studying at Nescot call 020 8394 3038, visit www.nescot.ac.uk or email adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk

NESCOT



Prue with Julie Kapsalis CEO and students in the Nescot professional kitchens.

Royal visit to Surrey University

16 February 2026



On 28 January, HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh and the University of Surrey's Chancellor, HRH The Duke of Kent, visited Surrey to celebrate the University's innovation, research and hands on learning. During their visit, they met students and staff from across campus, gaining insight into Surrey's multidisciplinary approach to education.

Medical students at the first and only medical school in Surrey met The Duchess of Edinburgh to demonstrate the

collaborative training that will shape their careers in the NHS. The Duchess returned to the University of Surrey's Kate Granger Building six years after she opened it as the home of its School of Health Sciences. Her Royal Highness met some of the University's first cohort of UK government-funded medical students who began their studies in September 2025.

The Duchess also met medical, nursing, midwifery and paramedic students learning together in the collaborative training wards before joining a virtual reality anatomy teaching session.

The University's Chancellor, The Duke of Kent, joined her Royal Highness at the Surrey Space Centre, where they visited labs to see a student-designed satellite deploy pod which will push a payload from a rocket into space.

At the Space Centre, The Duchess visited the satellite clean room toured by Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1998. In the clean room, Her Royal Highness helped to fit a panel engraved with Their Royal Highnesses' Royal Cyphers to Jovian-1, a satellite which Surrey students helped develop.

Schoolchildren who took part in the University's widening participation summer schools returned to campus to show off the hands-on STEM projects they enjoyed last year, with The Duke and Duchess joining in. Students from the University's Engineering Design Centre also had the opportunity to show His Royal Highness a range of projects, including rocket designs and Formula E racing cars.

Professor Stephen Jarvis, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Surrey, said:

"Training medical students alongside nursing, midwifery and paramedic students reflects how the NHS operates in practice. Our students graduate already equipped to work effectively in multidisciplinary teams, rather than having to learn this solely once they enter the workplace. The Duchess saw this first-hand in our training wards, where students from different disciplines learn together in realistic clinical settings.

"Her Royal Highness also saw our engineering students working on satellites they have designed and built themselves - hardware that will ultimately be launched into orbit. That combination of world-class research and practical, employer-ready skills lies at the heart of what we do. For our students, whether still studying or already well into their careers, having two members of the Royal Family witness this work first-hand is an experience they will long remember. It was a truly memorable day for our entire community."

The visit marked a return to sites with strong royal connections. Queen Elizabeth II visited the University's Guildford campus three times during her 70-year reign: in 1992, where she inaugurated the University's Centre for Satellite Engineering Research; 1998, when she once again paid a visit to the Surrey Space Centre; and in 2015, when she opened Surrey's School of Veterinary Medicine.

Patrick Degg, Vice-President, Global at the University of Surrey, said:

"We thank both The Duchess of Edinburgh and The Duke of Kent for their continued support for Surrey. The Duke has served as our Chancellor since June 1976. To have him return in this 50th year of his Chancellorship alongside The Duchess, and for them both to see the breadth of the research and teaching Surrey delivers has been a moment of collective pride.

"A programme that took in our pioneering space engineering, our new medical school and other aspects of our multidisciplinary research and teaching, spoke to the transformation The Duke has witnessed and championed throughout his tenure. His presence continues to inspire our community and affirm the values at the heart of this institution."

About Surrey Space Centre

Since its founding in 1979, the Surrey Space Centre has been a leading space engineering hub and is widely seen as the birthplace of the small satellite revolution. Professor Sir Martin Sweeting spun out Surrey Satellite Technologies Limited from his work at the Centre, and its recent missions have included RemoveDEBRIS, which demonstrated ways to capture debris in orbit.

The University recently announced the creation of the Surrey Space Institute, which brings together expertise across engineering, law, biosciences and artificial intelligence to build skills, partnerships and future space missions - with a particular focus on protecting Earth's resources and critical orbital infrastructure.

Surrey University



HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh looking at a picture of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at the University of Surrey.
Credit Surrey University

Ex-Gendarme launches Epsom safety awareness programme for children

16 February 2026



A new safety awareness programme for children has been launched in **Epsom** by former French armed police officer Xavier Vollin, who now works in the UK as a close protection officer for foreign diplomats and a behavioural detection instructor. Mr Vollin, who was awarded a Medal for Bravery during his police service, has more than 25 years' frontline experience in law enforcement, personal protection and behavioural analysis. He also trains colleagues in recognising early warning signs and behavioural anomalies in everyday environments. The initiative, developed under his training company XavSafety, is currently being piloted with children aged 9 to 13, with plans to expand to older teenagers and adults.

Seeing what others miss

Mr Vollin said that much traditional safety advice focuses on what to do once a situation has already gone wrong, whereas his approach concentrates on what happens before that point, helping participants notice changes in behaviour, inconsistencies in surroundings and subtle cues that may signal emerging risk. The programme emphasises calm awareness, observation and environmental understanding rather than confrontation or fear-based thinking. It is described as helping children "see what others miss", while remaining age-appropriate, engaging and accessible. Mr Vollin said the aim is not to turn children into "mini security officers", but to help them become more present, confident and aware of how people and environments can change around them.

Pilot programme underway in Epsom

The initial six-week programme began in early January 2026 and has deliberately been kept small to allow the format to be refined and adapted before wider rollout. Sessions combine practical exercises with elements of behavioural observation and pattern recognition, presented in a way intended to remain playful rather than intimidating. Early feedback from parents and children has been positive, although images and evaluation material are currently limited while the pilot phase continues. Future developments are expected to include programmes for older teenagers and adults, exploring the same core skills in greater depth, and Mr Vollin intends to formalise the framework and pursue CPD accreditation.

Focus on awareness in a digital age

Mr Vollin said the wider purpose of the project is to help young people reconnect with their surroundings at a time when attention is increasingly absorbed by screens. He described the underlying idea as being less about strength or reaction, and more about presence, understanding people and recognising risk early, before reaction becomes the only option. The programme is currently launching locally in Epsom, with potential for expansion depending on demand and community interest. Further details about the initiative can be found on the XavSafety website.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Students Tuesday takeover of Epsom Picturehouse

16 February 2026



Students from **University for the Creative Arts (UCA)** in Epsom are set to return to **Epsom Picturehouse** later this month with another imaginative cinema takeover - this time built around the release of *Marty Supreme*.

The one-night event takes place on **Tuesday 20th January**, with activities beginning at **6.30pm**, and forms part of UCA Epsom's *Experience Economy* module. Rather than focusing on conventional event mana

The January screening will again see students working directly with the Picturehouse team to create an enhanced, interactive evening that goes beyond simply watching a film. While full details are being kept under wraps, organisers promise live elements and audience interaction designed to complement the themes and setting of the film.

The collaboration builds on last year's well-received student takeover, which re-imagined *Be Kind Rewind* as a playful, hands-on cinema experience. That event featured live performances, green-screen activities and interactive installations that transformed the building into a temporary creative hub and demonstrated how cinema can function as a shared social space rather than a purely passive one.

This year's focus is *Marty Supreme*, a new film set in 1950s New York and starring **Timothée Chalamet** as Marty Mauser, a driven outsider determined to become a champion table-tennis player and turn the sport into a nationwide phenomenon. The story's emphasis on confidence, ambition and refusing to be overlooked has provided fertile ground for students developing ideas around performance, identity and audience participation.

Epsom Picturehouse, which opened in 2018, has become a central part of the town's cultural life, combining six screens showing independent cinema and mainstream releases with a café-bar that is used for talks, community events and special screenings. The venue is part of the Picturehouse chain, known nationally for its focus on curated programming and local partnerships.

UCA's Epsom campus, located at the former Epsom School of Art, specialises in creative business, marketing and performance-related courses, with an emphasis on practical collaboration with external organisations. Projects such as the Picturehouse takeover form part of the university's wider approach to linking students with real-world audiences and venues.

Joe Stroud, Marketing Manager at Epsom Picturehouse, said the partnership reflects a shared commitment to creativity and community, adding that working with students brings fresh perspectives into the cinema and helps re-imagine how audiences experience film.

The *Marty Supreme* cinema takeover is a **one-night-only** event, with tickets available via the Picturehouse website.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Surrey Uni powering hydrogen and low carbon energy

16 February 2026



A new partnership between the University of Surrey and leading clean energy technology company Ceres aims to speed up the development of next-generation clean power systems and hydrogen production - supporting the UK's net zero ambitions and helping address a growing skills gap in electrochemical energy technologies.

The collaboration brings together Ceres' expertise in solid oxide fuel cells (SOFC) and solid oxide electrolysis (SOEC) with Surrey's research strengths in electrochemical energy systems, digital and multiscale modelling, and advanced materials characterisation. Solid oxide electrolysis allows for highly efficient hydrogen production using electricity and heat, while solid oxide fuel cells can generate low carbon power for applications ranging from industrial processes to data centres.

Under the partnership, the teams will focus on improving the efficiency, durability and performance of these technologies, using advanced modelling and mechanistic insights to help translate fundamental research into real-world systems more quickly. Together, they will pursue joint research projects, collaborative funding bids and new training and placement opportunities for students.

Professor Qiong Cai, Professor in Sustainable Energy and Materials at the University of Surrey, and academic co-lead, said:

"Solid oxide electrolysis and fuel cells have huge potential to underpin the UK's future energy systems, from large-scale

